

What is claimed is:

1. A method for detecting the presence of CD163 in a biological sample comprising:
 - a) contacting the sample with a CD163 capture antibody to form a CD163-antibody complex; and
 - b) contacting the CD163-antibody complex with a CD163 detection antibody so that levels of CD163 in the sample are detected.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the CD163 capture antibody is MAC2-158 or MAC2-48 and the CD163 detection antibody is RM3/1.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the biological sample is human plasma.
4. A method for monitoring the course of an inflammatory condition or inflammatory process comprising detecting the presence of CD163 in biological samples via the method of claim 1.
5. A composition for prevention or treatment of inflammation comprising CD163.
6. The composition of claim 5 further comprising a glucocorticoid.
7. A method for reducing the signs and symptoms of inflammation comprising contacting cells or tissues with the composition of claim 5.
8. A method for reducing the signs and symptoms of inflammation comprising contacting cells or tissues with the composition of claim 6.

9. A method for preventing or treating inflammation in an animal comprising administering to the animal an effective amount of the composition of claim 5.

10. A method for preventing or treating inflammation 5 in an animal comprising administering to the animal an effective amount of the composition of claim 6.